

## **WRITING EFFECTIVELY: Hints and Helpful Guidance for the Army Writer**

### Writing Guide #1

The Army is effective only if information and directions are clearly communicated. In carrying out your military duties, you will write various types of correspondence. This student guide will help you become an effective Army writer.

### **ARMY WRITING STYLE**

#### **General Summary**

Following the components of the Army writing style will lead you to write to Army standard. The Army standard is stated as "transmits a clear message in a single rapid reading and is generally free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage." A general summary of the Army writing style is below:

1. Put the recommendation, conclusion or reason for writing -- the bottom line" -- in the first or second paragraph, not at the end.
2. Use the active voice.
3. Use short sentences (an average of 15 or fewer words).
4. Use short words (three syllables or fewer).
5. Write paragraphs that average 6 to 7 sentences in length.
6. Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
7. Use "I," "you," and "we" as subjects of sentences instead of "this office," "this headquarters," "all individuals," and so forth for most kinds of writing.
8. Retype correspondence only when pen and ink changes are not allowed, when the changes make the final product look sloppy, or when the correspondence is going outside DA or to the general public. In general, do not retype correspondence to make minor corrections.

Learning to accurately use the various components of the Army writing style correctly will help you learn to write using the Army writing standard

### **STEPS IN THE WRITING PROCESS**

#### Writing Guide #2

All writing follows the same basic steps regardless of whether you are writing for the Army or writing a research paper. The following steps will help you develop a well-thought out and well-written product.

- Step 1. RESEARCH
- Step 2. PLAN
- Step 3. PREPARE A DRAFT
- Step 4. REVISE YOUR DRAFT
- Step 5. PROOF

1. **STEP 1: RESEARCH.** Research is the gathering of ideas and information. This is the step where you answer the "who, when, where, what, and how of the issue". Since we gather information in different ways, you must find the system which best suits you and your task. This means that as you gather ideas, you must keep in mind both your purpose and your audience. Gather as many ideas as you can. Use all possible sources. It is easier to throw out ideas that you don't need than it is to go back and do more research. Once you have the ideas you need, you will continue to the planning stage.

#### Suggested Actions

- a. Collect as much information as possible about the subject.
  - (1) Record the information you collect about the subject.

- (2) Sources of information include
  - (a) The library.
  - (b) People who are subject matter experts.
  - (c) Regulations, journals, etc.
- b. Make detailed notes.
- c. Determine your audience.
- d. Organize your notes into a system that works for you. (color code or number, etc.)
- e. Clarify the purpose of your writing.
- f. Produce a trial controlling idea.

2. **STEP 2: PLAN.** The planning step is where you take all the information you've gathered and put it into a logical order. Start by placing your ideas into groups. Then order your groups in the way that best supports your task. The product that results is the outline. From this ordering, develop a controlling idea. A controlling idea is a single declarative sentence which presents both your topic and your position about that topic. An example of a controlling idea is presented below:

This year's majors  
*topic*  
are better prepared than last year's.  
*position*

Once you have developed the controlling idea, add your supporting paragraphs. What you have is a rough plan or outline. Now you're ready to write your first draft.

#### **Suggested Actions**

- a. Develop your outline
  - (1) Develop your controlling idea.
  - (2) Develop the major parts/ideas.
  - (3) Develop minor parts/ideas.
  - (4) Write out an introduction
  - (5) Write a draft conclusion
- b. Determine the format

3. **STEP 3. DEVELOP A DRAFT.** The draft is the bridge between your idea and the expression of it. Write your draft quickly and concentrate only on getting your ideas down on paper. Don't worry about punctuation and spelling. Use your outline to develop your draft. State your controlling idea (the bottom line) early and follow the order you've already developed. When you have the ideas down and you're satisfied with the sequence, you need to put the product into the correct Army writing format. This may result in your rewriting sections of your draft so that it fits the appropriate Army format. After you complete the formatting of your draft, put it aside. It is a good idea to get away from the paper for a while before you start to revise.

#### **Suggested Actions**

- a. Use your outline to write your first draft
- b. Put the draft into the correct Army writing format. (You may have to rewrite sections to fit the format.)
- c. Put the paper aside before you begin the revision.

4. **STEP 4. REVISE THE DRAFT.** Revising is looking at the material through the eyes of your audience. Read the paper as if you have never seen it before. Find where you need to put in transitions; look for places that need more evidence. This will help you decide if you need to add enclosures or add information depending on the type of written product you are developing. You now revise your draft making the changes you've noted.

#### **Suggested Actions**

- a. Make sure that your material is correct and stated accurately.

- b. Make sure that your paper can be easily understood in a “single rapid reading” and is written in the Army style. (see additional segments in your readings handouts for style and correctness guidance.)
- c. Make sure that the paper follows the correct format.

5. **STEP 5. PROOF.** Now you are ready to proof your draft. At this point concentrate on the format, grammar, mechanics, and usage. You may want to have someone else read it. Sometimes others can find errors you can't because you are too close to the product. When you finish, write the final version, making the corrections. Your product is now complete.

### **Suggested Actions**

- a. Make corrections.
- b. Ask another person to proof-read it.
- c. Write the final version.

## **THE PROCESS AND THE ELEMENTS**

### *Writing Guide #3*

This chart shows the elements of communication, the 5-step writing process, and their relationship to each other and the Army standard. The discussion below elaborates on the elements and the steps in the writing process and explains how they help you to achieve the Army standard.

find the one which best suits you and your task. This means that as you gather ideas, you must keep in mind both your purpose and your audience.

### **THE ELEMENTS**

The chart shows the elements of communication in order of their importance.

Substance is the most important of the elements. Substance includes your controlling idea and the support for it. It is the total concept you want to present. A good idea can survive mechanical flaws, but perfect spelling and grammar can't save poor ideas.

Organization comes next. Organization is the pattern you use to present your idea and support. There is no single way to present ideas. You must decide which organizational pattern best communicates your ideas. Poor organization can obscure good ideas.

Style, the third element, is how you present your material. It has to do with concerns such as formats, vocabulary, and packaging. For more information on the style the Army requires, see Writing Guide I.

Correctness, the last element, is what most people think of when you ask them what good writing is-- grammar, spelling, punctuation, and the other mechanical devices writers use. Correctness is important because errors can distract a reader from the ideas in the paper.

### **THE PROCESS**

Step 1 -- Research is the gathering of ideas. People gather ideas in different ways, so you must

Gather as many ideas as you can. It's easier to throw out the ideas you don't need than it is to go back and do more research. Once you have the ideas you need, go on to planning.

Step 2 -- Planning is the step in which you take all the information you've gathered and put it into a logical order. Start by placing your ideas into groups. Then order your groups in the way that best supports your task.

From this ordering, develop a controlling idea. A controlling idea is a single declarative sentence which presents both your topic and a position about that topic.

Third Brigade's readiness  
*Topic*  
is the best it's been in ten years.  
*Position*

Once you have the controlling idea, add your support paragraphs and an introduction (if needed) and a conclusion (if needed). What you have is a rough plan or outline. Now you're ready to write your first draft.

Step 3 -- Drafting is an important step. The draft is the bridge between your idea and the expression of it. Write your draft quickly and concentrate only on getting your ideas down on paper. Don't worry about punctuation and spelling errors.

Use your plan. State your controlling idea (the bottom line) early and follow the order you've already developed. When you have the ideas down and you're satisfied with the sequence, put the paper aside. You've finished the draft, and you need to get away from the paper for a while before you start to revise.

Step 4 -- Revising is looking at the material through the eyes of your audience. Read the paper as if you have never seen it before. Find where you need to put in transitions; look for places that need more evidence.

Then write another draft making the changes you've noted and using a simple style. Package the material so it's easy to read by using short paragraphs and labels (if necessary).

Step 5 -- Proof. Now you're ready to proof the draft. At this point, forget about substance, organization, and style; concentrate on grammar, mechanics, and usage. You may want to have someone else read the paper, too. Sometimes other people can find errors you can't because you're too close to the problem.

When you finish, write the final draft, making the corrections. Mission accomplished.

**NOTE:** I called the final paper a final draft because, as a good editor once said, "You never finish revising; you just run out of time."

## THE STANDARD

The relationship of the elements and the process to the Army standard should be apparent now. A writer achieves quality, substance, and organization through research and planning. These elements ensure understanding and rapid reading.

Likewise, style and correctness, achieved through revision and proofing, ensure the material is generally free of errors.

The important things to remember are these: each of the elements depends on the others, the steps in the

process are cyclical and function most effectively as a whole, and "good reading is... hard writing." (Hemingway)

Together, substance and organization have the most direct effect on the understandability of a paper. A clear, well-supported idea with an effective organization communicates. A faulty idea, faulty support, or faulty organization can defeat communication.

## **WRITING SIMPLY**

### *Writing Guide #4*

#### **BACKGROUND**

Too much writing doesn't do what it's supposed to communicate. Writers often have other agendas which supersede communicating: they want to impress their readers with their vocabulary, or they believe they must follow some "official" style.

#### **WRONG!**

#### **THE CLEAR WRITING STANDARD**

Good writing transmits a clear message in a single, rapid reading and is generally free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage. This is also the Army writing standard.

If you want to meet this standard, write simply. Adopt a conversational style.

#### **WRITE THE WAY YOU SPEAK**

There are three ways to do this--use personal pronouns, use contractions, and use the active voice.

Personal pronouns make writing personal. Look at the two samples below.

1. I'm responsible.
2. The undersigned official assumes responsibility.

The first version is conversational and communicates rapidly. Do you know anyone who talks like the second version? Neither do we.

When you're referring to yourself, use "I" or "me." When referring to your group or company, use "we" or "us." Use "you" for the person you're talking to--just like you do in conversation. Also you should

use the other personal pronouns such as "my," "your," "yours," "they," etc.

Contractions are part of our everyday language. Use them when you write. Don't force them in your writing, let them happen naturally. Negative contractions can be especially useful in softening commands and making it harder for the reader to miss your meaning.

Use the active voice when you write rather than the passive. If you want more information on active and passive voice, see Writer's Guide Number 5.

#### **OTHER WAYS TO SIMPLIFY WRITING**

Use jargon, including acronyms, carefully. Jargon and acronyms communicate only to those who understand them. Everyone else is lost.

If you're in doubt, use everyday words (even if this means using more words), and spell out acronyms on first use. It's better to use more words than confuse your reader.

Use simpler language. Why say "at this point in time" when you could say "now"? Is "utilize" really better than "use."

Simpler is better.

#### **USE THE HELP AVAILABLE**

Ask your co-workers. Show your material to someone who hasn't seen it before. Ask them if the material is easy to understand. Ask them if you left anything out. The danger here is that friends and co-workers are sometimes reluctant to tell you what they really think. They don't want to hurt your feelings.

Search out honest feedback and use it to improve your writing. Don't take offense at what someone tells you because you'll not get honest feedback anymore.

Another way to review your work is to set it aside for a while. Work on something else, and let your brain

"cool off" on that subject. You'll break the mindset you've been working with and be able to take a fresh look at the paper

## THE CLARITY INDEX

The clarity index is a measure of the ease or difficulty of reading a piece of writing. The process is mechanical and objective.

1. Take a sample of the writing (not over one page) and count the number of words.
2. Count the number of sentences.
3. Divide the number of words by the number of sentences. The result will be the number of words per sentence.

**words/sentences = words per sentence)**

4. Count the number of long words (three or more syllables) in the sample.
5. Divide the number of long words by the total number of words to get the percentage of long words.

**(long words/total words = percent of long words)**

6. Finally, add the words per sentences and the percentage of long words. The sum is the clarity index.

**(wps + percent of long words = clarity index)**

The target clarity index is 30. If your clarity index is below 25, your writing is probably choppy. If the clarity index is over 35, most people will have difficulty reading it rapidly.

Since the clarity index is based on the length of words and sentences, you can raise the index number by combining sentences. By joining sentences, you will not only smooth out the choppiness but also show a better relationship between ideas.

Likewise, to lower the number, use shorter, simpler words and break up long sentences.

As you can tell, the process of running a clarity index is time-consuming. You won't have time to run one on every piece of your writing.

But, on those occasions when a piece of writing (yours or someone else's) seems particularly hard to read, try running a clarity index. Chances are the index will be off one way or the other.

## ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

### Writing Guide #5

## DESCRIPTION

Active Voice occurs when the subject of the sentence does the action.

John will load the trailer.  
*actor      action*

Passive Voice occurs when the subject of the sentence receives the action.

The trailer will be loaded by John.  
*receiver      action                  actor*

## PROBLEMS WITH PASSIVE

The style of writing which the Army adopted in 1984, requires writers to use active voice whenever possible.

1. Passive voice obscures or loses part of the substance (the actor) of a sentence. When you use passive voice, the receiver of the action becomes the subject of the sentence; and the actor appears in a prepositional phrase after the verb.

Worse yet, you can leave the actor out completely and still have a good English sentence. This means you have eliminated part of the substance.

Calisthenics were conducted by the Coach.

(Calisthenics is not the actor.)

*subject                  verb                  actor*

Your pay records were lost. (No actor.)

*subject                  verb*

2. Passive voice is less conversational than active voice. Therefore, it is less natural when someone reads it.

Passive: A drink of water is required by me.

Active: I need a drink of water.

3. Passive voice is less efficient than active voice. Active writing usually requires fewer words to get the same message to your audience. The number of words saved per sentence may seem small, but when you multiply that savings by the number of sentences in a paper, the difference is much more significant.

Passive: The letter was typed by Cheryl. (6 words)

Active: Cheryl typed the letter. (4 words - a 33 percent reduction)

### IDENTIFYING PASSIVE VOICE

You can locate passive voice in your writing in much the same way a computer would. Look for a form of the verb "to be" (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, or been) followed by a past participle verb (a verb ending in ed, en, or t). Passive voice requires **BOTH!**

Your leave was approved by the commander.

A "to be" verb by itself is simply an inactive verb (shows no action). A verb ending in ed, en, or t by itself is a past tense verb and not passive voice.

The rifle is loaded.

(No physical action taking place.)

The *Eagle* landed on the Moon.

(An action in the past.)

### DECISION TIME

Once you have found the passive voice in your (or someone else's writing), you have to decide whether you want to change it to active or not.

That's right. There are times when passive voice is appropriate.

1. Use passive voice when you want to emphasize the receiver of the action.

Passive: Your mother was taken to the hospital.

Active: An ambulance took your mother to the hospital.

2. Use passive voice when you don't know who did the action.

Passive: The rifle was stolen.

Active: A person or persons stole the rifle.

## CHANGING PASSIVE VOICE TO ACTIVE VOICE

If you decide to change the passive voice to active voice, the process is really quite simple. First, find out who did, is doing, or will do the action--the actor.

Next, use the actor as the subject of the sentence. Finally, use the right tense active verb to express the action. BINGO!

Voice	Present Tense	Past Tense
Active	John wrecks the car.	John wrecked the car.
Passive	The car is being wrecked by John.	The car was wrecked by John

Fig 1: A voice/tense matrix

## PERSON IN PRONOUNS

Writing Guide #6

### First Person

Writers use first person when they are the "person" speaking in the document. First person shows that what is said is the opinion of the writer or the writer as part of a group. The pronouns below show first person.

<u>Subjective</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Possessive</u>
Singular	I, me	my, mine
Plural	we, us	our, ours

### Second Person

Writers use second person when the document is addressed directly to one person or one group of people. Second person makes the communication personal. The list below shows the second person pronouns.

<u>Subjective</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Possessive</u>
Singular	you	your, yours
Plural	you	your, yours

### Third Person

Writers use third person when they want the communication to be impersonal or directed to a non-specific audience. They also use it to show they are talking about an object (or non-human form of life) or someone other than themselves or the person or persons they are directly addressing. The pronouns used to show third person are below. Note that in third person the singular pronouns show gender.

<u>Subjective</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Possessive</u>
Singular	he, she, it him, her, it	his, hers, its
Plural	they	them, theirs



Nouns can also show third person. When the writer uses a person's or place's name or another noun which names the person, thing, or group, he is using third person.

## PRONOUNS

	<u>Subjective</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Possessive</u>
<b>1st Person</b>			
	Singular	I,	my, mine
	Plural	we, us	our, ours
<b>2nd Person</b>			
	Singular	you	your, yours
	Plural	you	your, yours
<b>3rd Person</b>			
	Singular	he, she, it him, her, it who, whom	his, hers, its  whose
	Plural	they, them	theirs

1. Use subjective pronouns as follows:

- a. As the subject of a verb. Ex: **We** ran the marathon last week.
- b. In appositives which define the subject. Ex: We boys, Jerry, John, and **I**, went to the store.
- c. After the verb forms of **to be** (linking verbs). Ex: It was **she**. // I wish I were **he**.

2. Use objective pronouns as follows:

- a. As the direct object of verbs (answers the question *who* or *what* about the verb?). Ex: The bull chased **them** across the field.
- b. As the indirect object of verbs (answers the question **to whom** or **to what** the action of the verb is directed). Ex: Bill threw the ball to **him**.
- c. As the object of a preposition. Ex: I went to the store with Joan and **her**.

3. Use pronouns after the verb when

- a. The words **than** and **as**, use a subjective pronoun whenever the pronoun is the subject of an understood verb. Ex: He fears the dog more than **I** (do).
- b. If the pronoun is the object of an understood verb, use the objective pronoun. Ex: He fears the dog more than (he fears) **me**.

4. Use possessive pronouns to show ownership.

5. Use possessive pronouns with gerunds (verbs ending with **-ing**) when they are the subject of a sentence. Ex: **His being** elected class president meant a lot to him.

## TRANSITIONAL MARKERS

### *Writing Guide #7*

Clear writing requires that communications be:

*"...understandable in a single rapid reading..."*

One way to ensure your writing meets this standard is to make your material coherent. That is, ensure your ideas flow together logically.

Coherence means more than just connecting your sentences mechanically. It means that the way you connect your ideas reflects the relationship between them. Words and phrases called transitional markers establish the relationship.

To make your writing effective, you must choose the transitional marker that reflects the relationship you want to establish. Listed below are words or phrases you can use to help you transition from one idea to another grouped by the relationship they establish between ideas.

You can use these transition markers within sentences, between sentences, and between paragraphs. The result will be that your reader will be able to follow your ideas as they flow from one to another.

#### To indicate addition:

again  
also  
and then  
besides  
equally important  
finally  
first\*  
further  
furthermore  
in addition  
last  
likewise  
moreover  
next  
too

#### To indicate cause and effect:

accordingly  
consequently  
hence  
in short  
then  
therefore  
thus  
truly

#### To indicate comparison:

in a like manner  
likewise  
similarly

#### To indicate concession:

after all  
although this may be true  
at the same time  
even though  
I admit  
naturally  
of course

#### To indicate contrast:

after all  
although true  
and yet  
at the same time  
but  
for all that  
however  
in contrast  
in spite of  
nevertheless  
notwithstanding  
on the contrary  
on the other hand  
still yet

#### To indicate time relationships:

after a short time  
afterwards  
as long as  
as soon as  
at last  
at length  
at that time  
at the same time  
before  
earlier  
immediately  
in the meantime  
lately  
later  
meanwhile  
of late  
presently  
shortly  
since  
soon  
temporarily  
thereafter  
thereupon  
until  
when  
while

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\* And other ordinal numbers like second, third, etc.

## THE JOINING OF SENTENCES

### Writing Guide #8

#### Vocabulary

*Simple Sentence:* A complete sentence that expresses a single thought.

*Independent Clause:* A simple sentence which is combined with another simple sentence or a dependent clause to form either a compound or complex sentence.

*Dependent Clause:* A group of words that adds information to or modifies an independent clause. It is not a complete sentence and can not stand by itself as a sentence.

*Compound Sentence:* A sentence formed by the joining of two independent clauses using a coordinating conjunction, a semicolon, or a conjunctive adverb (options 1,2, and 3 below).

*Complex sentence:* A sentence composed of an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses joined by subordinating conjunctions (option 4 below).

*Compound-Complex Sentences:* A sentence containing two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. The methods of joining these clauses may include any of the options below.

#### Joining Sentences --The Options

##### Option 1 -- The Coordinating Conjunction.

The most common way to join two simple sentences (independent clauses) is with a coordinating conjunction. To join sentences this way, place a comma after the first independent clause, write the coordinating conjunction, and add the second independent clause.

Independent Clause + , + Coordinating Conjunction + Independent Clause

and, or, but, nor, for,  
yet, so

Example: I went to Germany, but Bill went to the Japan.

##### Option 2 -- The Semicolon.

To join two closely related simple sentences (independent clauses), you may use a semicolon without a conjunction.

Independent Clause + ; + Independent Clause

Example: I went to Germany; Bill went with me.

##### Option 3 -- The Semicolon and a Conjunctive Adverb

The third way to combine two simple sentences (independent clauses) is to use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb. Conjunctive adverbs carry the thought of the first independent clause to the next one.

To join sentences using this method, write the first independent clause, add a semicolon, write the conjunctive adverb, place a comma after the conjunctive adverb, and write the second independent clause.

Independent Clause + ; + Conjunctive Adverb + , + Independent Clause

however, therefore,  
indeed, moreover,  
consequently, etc.

Example: I wanted to become an artist; therefore, I went to Paris.

#### **Option 4 -- Subordinate Conjunction**

The final method of joining two simple sentences is the use of subordinating conjunctions. Example 4a below shows the more common subordinating conjunctions. When using this method one sentence remains an independent clause and the other becomes a dependent clause. The most important idea is the independent clause.

As the three examples below show, you can move the dependent clause to several positions within the sentence. This flexibility adds variety to your writing. Be sure you use the necessary punctuation, however.

a. Independent Clause + Subordinating Conjunction + Dependent Clause

after, although, as,  
as if, before, because,  
if, since, unless, when,  
since, unless, when,  
whenever, until, while

Example: I went to the movie although Bill went bowling.

b. Subordinating Conjunction + Dependent Clause + , + Independent Clause

Example: Although Bill went bowling, I went to the movie.

c. Part of Independent Clause + , + Subordinating Conjunction + Dependent Clause + , + Part of Dependent Clause

Example: I, although Bill went bowling, went to the movie.

Note that examples 4b and 4c require commas to separate the subordinating conjunction and dependent clause from the independent clause.

## EXPRESSING SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS

### Writing Guide #9

As a writer, you will often find ideas which are clearly related but are not equal in importance. Instead of using a coordinating conjunction which joins ideas of equal importance, you will need to use a conjunction which joins the ideas but expresses the subordinate relationship.

The listing below groups the subordinating conjunctions by the relationship they establish. We've also included an example of each type of relationship.

#### Subordinating Conjunction

##### **Cause**

Because, since      Many students live off campus. They often form car pools.  
                             Since many students live off campus, they often form car pools.

##### **Condition**

if, even if,      We can provide realistic football training. We must coordinate with other teams.  
                             We can provide realistic football training if we coordinate with other teams.  
unless      We cannot provide realistic football training unless we coordinate with other teams.

##### **Concession**

although,      We have better equipment than the schools of the 1970's.  
though,      We have less funding.  
even though      We have better equipment than the schools of the 1970's even though we have less funding.

##### **Purpose**

in order that,      The boss canceled most of the vacations for May. The company will hold a  
so that      training session for junior executives.  
                             The boss canceled most of the vacations for May so that the company can hold a training  
                             session for junior executives.

##### **Time**

as long as,      There will be plenty of parking space.  
after, when      The contractor will finish the new parking garage by June.  
while, before,      There will be plenty of parking space as long as the contractor finishes the new parking  
until      garage by June.

##### **Location**

where,      The new company headquarters building stands on treeless land.  
wherever      The company picnic area used to be there.  
                             The new company headquarters building stands on treeless land where the company picnic  
                             area once was.

As you can see by the examples above, using subordinating conjunctions generally makes the sentences longer. The relationship between the ideas, however, is clearer. Having some longer sentences is a good tradeoff for clarity.

# CAPITALIZATION

## Writing Guide #10

1. Capitalize the first word of every sentence, including quoted sentences.

She said, "The work is finished."

Eskimo  
English  
Japanese  
Louisa May Alcott

2. Capitalize the first word of a line of poetry.

"Had we but world enough, and time,  
This coyness, lady, were no crime."  
- Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress"

9. Capitalize specific places. This includes geographic directions when they refer to a specific area, but not points of the compass.

Japan  
Atlantic Ocean  
Missouri River  
Room 219  
The Todd Building  
Fairmount Park  
the Old South

3. Capitalize words and phrases used as sentences.

Why?  
Yes, indeed.  
Of course.

4. Capitalize the first word of a formal question or statement following a colon.

He asked several questions: "Where are you going? "What is your goal?" What will you do? What is your goal  
I offered a word of advice: "Read only the best books."

10. Capitalize specific organizations.

United Nations  
Warsaw Pact  
Red Cross  
Ace Tire Company

5. Capitalize the first word of each item in a formal outline.

I. Sports taught this semester.  
A. Swimming  
B. Softball

11. Capitalize the days of the week, months, and holidays, but not the seasons.

Monday  
October  
Veteran's Day  
Fourth of July  
fall

6. Capitalize the first and last and all other important words in a title.

The Naked and the Dead

12. Capitalize religious names.

Allah  
God  
the Virgin  
the Bible  
the Lord

7. Capitalize the first and last word in the salutation and the first word of the complimentary close of a letter.

My dearest Son,  
Very truly yours,

13. Capitalize historical events, periods, and documents.

the Constitution  
Battle of Gettysburg  
the Middle Ages

8. Capitalize proper nouns and proper adjectives. A proper noun is the name of a particular person place or thing. A proper adjective is an adjective derived from a proper noun, i.e., American from America.

14. Capitalize the names of educational institutions, departments, specific courses, classes of students, and specific academic degrees. This does not mean to capitalize academic disciplines such as mathematics (except as they are proper adjectives like French).

Washboard College  
Junior Class  
Biology 101  
M.Ed.

15. Capitalize the names of flags, emblems, and school colors.

Old Glory  
Bronze Star  
Green and Gold

16. Capitalize the names of stars and planets.

Earth  
the North Star  
the Big Dipper  
Jupiter

17. Capitalize the names of ships, trains, aircraft, and spacecraft

Titanic  
the Crescent Express  
City of Los Angeles  
Enterprise

18. Capitalize the initials which are used in acronyms.

B.C.  
NATO  
OK (for Oklahoma)  
WKRP  
FBI  
CTAC

19. Capitalize personifications.

Mother Nature  
Old Man Winter  
the face of Death

20. Capitalize titles preceding a name.

Professor Jane Melton  
Chief Justice Burger  
Reverend Beliveau

21. Capitalize the interjection Oh and the pronoun I.





## PUNCTUATION -- THE COMMA

### Writing Guide #11

About half of the errors in punctuation are comma errors. This writer's guide is a quick reference for you, so you won't make the most common errors with commas. The guide will not cover all of the minute details of commas, just the ones we use most often.

1. Commas set off independent clauses which are joined by a coordinating conjunction

The chairman is Shauna Sloan, and the president is Jamie Harris.

2. Commas set off introductory elements.

a. Adverb clauses: If you register now, you can vote by mail.

b. Long prepositional phrases: In the cool air of the April morning, we prepared for the track and field meet.

c. Verbal phrases.

Speaking off the record, the Senator addressed the senior class.

3. Commas separate the items in a series when there are more than two items.

The book is available in book-stores, at newsstands, or by mail.

4. Commas separate coordinate adjectives when they are of equal importance.

Tall, stately trees lined the boulevard.

5. Commas set off parenthetical expressions. These words or phrases interrupt the flow of the sentence and are not essential to its meaning.

a. General parenthetical expressions:

She was, in my opinion, an outstanding leader. The entire speech, moreover, lacked vitality.

b. Nonrestrictive (nonessential) clauses:

Parsons Boulevard, which runs past my house, is being repaved.

c. Nonrestrictive (nonessential) phrases:

14. Commas set off the greeting and complimentary close of letters.

Mrs. Atlee, wearing red, is the ambassador's sister.

d. Nonrestrictive (nonessential) appositives:

America's first general, George Washington, started his own navy.

6. Commas set off absolute phrases.

The day being warm, we headed for the beach.

7. Commas set off names or words used in direct address.

Carole, what are you doing?

8. Commas set off yes or no at the beginning of a sentence.

Yes, there is a lot of reading to this course.

9. Commas set off mild interjections.

Well, I'll have to think about that.

10. Commas set off explanatory words like she said from direct quotations.

Churchill said, "Short words are best."

11. Commas set off examples introduced by such as, especially, and particularly.

John enjoys outdoor sports, such as football and hunting.

12. Commas replace omitted or understood words.

Captain Franklin attended West Point; his brother, the Coast Guard Academy

13. Commas separate confirmatory questions from statements.

It's cold in here today, isn't it?

Dear Mabel,

...

Sincerely,

15. Commas set off the elements of dates and addresses.

On March 3, 1984, we had a blizzard in Kansas.  
He lives at 321 Maple Street, Kokomo, Indiana.

16. Commas group words to prevent misreading.

After eating, the boys became sleepy (Not "after  
eating the boys...").

Inside, the dog was growling (Not "Inside the dog...")

## PUNCTUATION -- THE COLON AND THE SEMICOLON

### Writing Guide #12

#### THE COLON

1. The colon introduces the following:

A list, but only after as follows, the following, or a noun for which the list is an appositive:

Each scout will carry the following: meals for three days, a survival knife, and his sleeping bag.

The company had four new officers: Bill Smith, Frank Tucker, Peter Fillmore, and Oliver Lewis.

- b. A long quotation (one or more paragraphs):

In *The Killer Angels* Michael Shaara wrote:

You may find it a different story from the one you learned in school. There have been many versions of that battle [Gettysburg] and that war [the Civil War].

(The quote continues for two more paragraphs.)

- c. A formal quotation or question:

The President declared: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

The question is: what can we do about it?

- d. A second independent clause which explains the first:

Potter's motive is clear: he wants the assignment.

- e. After the introduction of a business letter:

Dear Sirs: or Dear Madam:

- f. The details following an announcement:

For sale: large lakeside cabin with dock

- g. A formal resolution, after the word resolved:

Resolved: That this council petition the mayor.

- h. The words of a speaker in a play:

Macbeth: She should have died hereafter.

2. The colon separates the following:

- a. Parts of a title, reference, or numeral:

*Principles of Mathematics: An Introduction*  
Luke 3: 4-13  
8:15 a.m.

- b. The place of publication from the publisher, and the volume number from the pages in bibliographies:

Miller, Jonathan, *The Body in Question*. New York: Random House, 1978.  
Jarchow, Elaine. "In Search of Consistency in Composition Scoring." *English Record* 23.4 (1982): 18--19.

#### THE SEMICOLON

1. Semicolons can join closely related independent clauses which are not joined by a coordinating conjunction.

Since the mid-1970's America's campuses have been relatively quiet; today's students seem interested more in courses than causes.

2. Semicolons punctuate two independent clauses joined by a conjunctive adverb.

On weekdays the club closes at eleven; however, on weekends it's open until one.

3. Semicolons punctuate clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction when the clauses have commas within them.

Today people can buy what they need from department stores, supermarkets, and discount stores; but in Colonial days, when such

conveniences did not exist, people depended on general stores and peddlers.

4. Semicolons punctuate items in a series when there are commas within the series.

At the alumni dinner, I sat with the school's best-known athlete, Gary Wyckoff; the editor of the paper; two stars of the class play, a fellow and a girl who later married each other; and Tad Frump, the class clown.



# PUNCTUATION -- THE APOSTROPHE, THE DASH, THE HYPHEN, AND ITALICS

## *Writing Guide #13*

### THE APOSTROPHE

1. The apostrophe forms the possessive case of nouns.

Mr. Smith's car  
Bob Davis's boat -- singular  
the Davises' boat -- plural  
the women's coats -- plural  
father-in-law's

In hyphenated words, add the apostrophe to the last word.

2. Apostrophes show the omission of letters or numerals.

don't  
can't  
class of '84

3. Apostrophes add clarity when forming the plural of words, letters, symbols, and numbers referred to as words (including acronyms).

She earned three A's.  
There are two MSC's on post.  
His 3's and 5's look alike.  
The Cowboys dominated football in the 1970's.  
Use +'s and -'s on the test.

### THE DASH

1. The dash (indicated by -- n typing) shows a sudden break in thought.

Well, if that's how you feel -- I guess the game is over.

2. The dash sets off parenthetical elements.

The train arrived--can you believe it--right on time.

3. The dash emphasizes an appositive.

Bill only worried about one thing--food.

4. The dash precedes the author's name after a direct quotation.

"That is nonsense up with which I will not put."--Winston Churchill

### THE HYPHEN

1. The hyphen joins compound words.

mother-in-law

2. The hyphen joins words to make a single adjective.

senior-level leadership

3. The hyphen indicates two-word numbers (21 to 99) and two-word fractions.

twenty-two    three-fourths

4. The hyphen separates the prefixes ex- (when it means former), self-, all-, and the suffix -elect from the base word.

ex-president  
all-conference  
self-confident  
Senator-elect

5. The hyphen indicates words divided at the end of a line.

The classroom accommodates thirty--  
six people.

## ITALICS (UNDERLINING)

1. Italics, underlining, designates titles of separate publications.

Books -- The Catcher in the Rye

Magazines and newspapers --Newsweek/The New York Times

Pamphlets--Bee Keeping

Plays, TV and radio programs,  
and films--The Burning Bed

Long Poems--The Candelabras Tales

2. Italics indicate the names of ships, aircraft, and spacecraft.

Schultz sailed on the Enterprise.

The explosion aboard the Challenger was a tragedy.

3. Italics indicate the titles of paintings and sculptures.

The Mona Lisa

Crossing the Delaware

4. Italics indicate foreign words not yet Anglicized.

It was a fait accompli.

5. Italics indicate words, symbols, letters, or figures when used as such.

The t is often silent.

Avoid using & in formal writing.

6. Italics show emphasis.

You are so right about the car.

## PUNCTUATION – QUOTATION MARKS

### Writing Guide #14

1. Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotations.

MacArthur vowed, "I shall return," as he left the islands.

- a. With an interrupted quotation, use quotation marks only around the quoted words.

"I heard," said Amy, "that you passed the course."

- b. With an uninterrupted quotation of several sentences, use quotation marks before the first sentence and after the last.

Jenkins said, "Something's wrong. I know it. He should have called in by now."

- c. With long uninterrupted quotations of several paragraphs, use either of the following forms.

(1) Put quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph but at the end of only the last paragraph.

(2) Use no quotation marks at all; instead, indent the entire quotation and type it single spaced.

- d. With a short quotation that is not a complete sentence, use no commas.

Barrie described life as "a long lesson in humility."

- e. Use the ellipsis (three periods {...}) to indicate the omission of unimportant or irrelevant words from a quotation.

"What a heavy burden is a name that has become...famous."

--Voltaire

- f. Use brackets to indicate explanatory words added to the quotation.

"From a distance it [fear] is something; nearby it is nothing."

--La Fontaine

- g. When quoting dialogue, start a new paragraph with each change of speaker.

"He's dead," Holmes announced.

"Are you sure?" the young lady asked.

2. Use quotation marks around the titles of short written works: poems, articles, essays, short stories, chapters, and songs.

The first chapter in The Guns of August is entitled "A Funeral."

I still get misty-eyed when I hear "Danny Boy."

3. Use quotation marks around definition of words.

The original meaning of lady was "kneader of bread."

4. Use quotation marks to indicate the special use of a word.

Organized crime operates by having its ill-gotten gains "laundered" so they appear legitimate.

5. Use a set of single quotation marks to indicate a quotation within a quotation.

She asked, "Who said, 'Let them eat cake.'?"

6. Place periods and commas inside quotation marks.

Dr. Watson said, "It's the speckled band."

7. Place colons and semicolons outside the quotation marks.

Coe barked, "I have nothing to say"; then he left.

8. Place question marks, exclamation marks, and dashes inside the quotation marks when the punctuation belongs to the quote and outside the quotation marks when they do not.

Shauna said, "Who is my opponent?"

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Shauna said, "Who is my opponent?"

Did Shauna say, "I fear no opponent"?